



**The New Martyr Catherine of Attica
Whom the Holy Church Commemorates on November 15.**

*Dismissal Hymn for Saint Catherine. Fourth Tone
Be quick to Anticipate*

DEFENDING the sacrificer of the Crucified Christ, * O Catherine, thou willingly wast offered up to Him as an unblemished sacrifice; * thou didst weave the Church a royal robe from thine own blood, * and with fervour thou dost intercede with the Master * to save them that faithfully praise thy hallowed martyrdom.

*Kontakion of Saint Catherine. Fourth Tone
On this day Thou hast appeared*

AT the right hand of the Lord * now standeth Catherine, * crowned in everlasting light * and crying out in endless joy: * O Christ, my Bridegroom, Thou art the strength * of them that honour the boundaries the Fathers set.

Megalynarion of Saint Catherine

WITH the blood that streamed from thy wounded head, * O New Martyr Catherine * thou hast watered the Church of Christ * when the land was parched from a drought of true confession; * now with thine intercessions, water our withered hearts.



**† THE HOLY MARTYRS OF MOUNT ATHOS
WHO MADE A TRUE CONFESSION
OF THE ORTHODOX FAITH
UNDER PATRIARCH JOHN BECCOS 1275**

The True Orthodox Christians were tried just as gold purified in the furnace, because they preciously guarded the Orthodox Faith, received from the Holy Fathers, as a priceless treasure. In depicting the essential part of the New Martyr Catherine's witness we are fulfilling an imperative duty. The Triumph of our Orthodox Faith must be made known; the sacrifice of this faithful ewe-lamb of our Lord's flock, full of the flame of faith and the love of Christ, must be proclaimed.

The New Martyr Catherine was born in Mandra in Attica in 1900 to poor but pious parents, the ever-memorable John and Maria Peppas. Whenever necessary, Catherine, the youngest of the family, offered her services cheerfully and was hardworking.

At the age of twenty-two she married Constantine Routis from the village. God gave them two children, Christos and Irene. The devout Routis family joined the resistance of the True Orthodox Christians, participating in all the services and public demonstrations for their Faith, even when this was perilous—all for the sacred defense of the traditions of the holy Fathers.

It was in fact at the end of the Divine Liturgy on November 8, 1927, that Catherine was to sacrifice herself, thus receiving the unfading crown of Martyrdom.

But let us leave it to the writer of *Ta Patria* to explain:

Mandara in Attica, a place of heroic and tragic events, is also the place which offers as an example to our materialistic age a heroine for the Faith, the young New Martyr Catherine Routis. Every Christian has heard of the rivers of blood that have been shed to make steadfast the True Faith in Christ, but who would have foreseen that the blood of martyrs is still necessary to save the Church from heretical influences and innovation? Come, Christians, you that bear patiently the contempt of the crowds who call you “Old Calendarists.” Come, and learn the way our fathers and brothers, who lived during the first years after the schism, contested; how they glorified the Church of the True Orthodox Christians, that you might live in all freedom and honour and adore God.

Let us follow the thread of the bloody events at Mandra, which started during the All-night Vigil and the Liturgy in honor of the Holy Archangels, at dawn on November 8, 1927, and which ended tragically in the church at that place.

On the eve of the festival of the Holy Orders, some pious women from Mandra, together with the brave Catherine, had cleaned the Church and prepared it, so that nothing was lacking for the awaited festival. They had done everything they could to find an Orthodox priest, faithful to the calendar of the Fathers, for at that time such clergymen were literally overwhelmed by the demands of the faithful. The faithful at Mandara had therefore welcomed the ever-memorable Father Christopher Psallidas with enthusiasm. The whole population greeted him with joy, whilst the bells of the churches rang out merrily—so greatly esteemed and loved were faithful priests, those first fighters in the sacred struggle of the True Orthodox Christians, which was then just beginning.

Vespers started quietly in peace. The Vigil could have started and ended in the same atmosphere, if the police, who were not welcome on such an evening, had not appeared and, with evil intent, surrounded the church. It is reasonable to inquire into the reasons for this state of siege. Neither malefactors nor gangsters were hidden in the church. The church was “occupied” only by decorous guardians of Patristic Orthodox Tradition, who, in a fitting manner, had gathered to celebrate their guardian saints. What was it, then, that the police so insistently wanted? They were only obeying the orders of the schismatic Archbishop of Athens, namely to arrest the priest and scatter the “mob” of the faithful.

The police had received their orders, but the Christians of Mandra also had to obey an order, the God-given order not to permit the celebration to be disrupted. Thus the door of the church was shut, and the Liturgy proceeded with even more compunction because of the ever-present threat of arms. The police then struck the doors with their rifle butts, trying to knock them down. They broke the window panes. And yet we are in the twentieth century, in the middle of an era of progress, an era of religious liberty! What a terrible example from the motherland of the Hellenes, from the motherland of Orthodox Christians!

The faithful continued to pray inside the church, quietly, piously, whilst outside the schismatic forces were moving about shouting insults. Inside the faithful were asking for the Lord’s support, that they might patently bear the unjust persecution.

Outside, the police called for reinforcements so that they might attain their impious goal. But did they need reinforcements? Did they need so much to arrest one pious quiet, brave priest? But how were they to break the resistance of the faithful people if not by arms?

It was nearly dawn. Inside the church most of the faithful received Communion and were waiting for the blessing of the priest to end the service, so that they could take him out safely and give him an opportunity to rest in a neighbouring house. But how could they do this, when the praetorians of the schismatics were on guard outside? But they had received the only strength they needed: they had just communed the Body and Blood of Christ! Nothing was frightening them anymore. They advanced; the door opened the faithful started to go out. A living wall of pious women from Mandra surrounded the endangered priest. From the shadows the schismatic forces sprang in

front of them like rapacious wolves, and demanded that the people surrender the priest into their hands.

But why? the faithful wondered with good reason. Has he committed a crime? Has he done wrong? No, nothing like that. But still they demanded the priest. Who would go and hand him over to them? Among the faithful there were no Judases.

“You will arrest our priest only over our dead bodies!” Such were the noble words that came from the mouth of one woman. It was the voice of Catherine Routis, who, having made sure her husband and children were safely hidden at home, came back to rejoin the priest.

The parents of the New Martyr Catherine have attested to the fact that after Vespers her husband suggested that they go home because he feared an incident. But it was impossible for Catherine to stay home. So when her sister told her of the dangers that the faithful were facing in the church, besieged by the police, she left the house and rushed in among the combatants. She ran to her martyrdom!

The police, failing to break through the human cordon, started to shoot with their rifles to frighten the people. They only succeeded to a degree. A few faithful moved away, but the human wall stayed intact around the priest. They were taken aback by the savagery of the police attack. A bullet struck the ever-memorable Angeliki Katsarellis in the temple. To the end of her life, Angeliki proudly showed the “mark of the Lord” on her forehead, which had been inscribed by a murderous police bullet on that night.

Meanwhile, Catherine Routis did not flinch. She went on courageously denouncing the praetorian forces of the schismatics, until she saw a policeman raise his rifle to strike the priest. As soon as she realized his evil intention, with courage and complete self-sacrifice she covered the priest with her body and received the mortal blow to the back of her head. Catherine fell, staining the floor of the church with the blood of her martyrdom. One could just hear her whisper for the last time, “Most Holy Mother of God...”

The anxious, weeping women took up her bloodied body, and, having informed her husband Constantine, took her to the Annunciation Hospital in Athens. The pious Angeliki, who had been injured by the bullet, was also taken there at the same time as Catherine, but she came out after a few days.

Catherine, motionless in bed, suffered enormously for seven days. Unable to speak, she gestured for a paper to write a note to her husband, to commend to his care their two little children, one four years old and the other only a few months old.

On November 15, 1927, according to the Orthodox Calendar, on the first day of the Nativity Fast at 4 a.m., Catherine gave her martyric soul into the hands of Christ, Who crowned her.

The church council of the True Orthodox Christians then mobilized all the faithful they could contact. Hers was no funeral, but a procession of the relics of a martyr. Thousands of faithful people followed the procession, some with flowers, some with candles, and others with palm branches.

Christians! Take strength from the example given by a young mother, a woman of twenty seven, who gave her life for the sacred Faith! The New Martyr Catherine is “the honor, the glory, and the pride” of the Church of the True Orthodox Christians, and she will be remembered as an example of faith and love, and a witness filled with self-denial and sacrifice for the traditions of the Fathers.

“Catherine, in our times, there were no swords, stakes, or spears. They had only the butts of their guns to try to frighten you. What a miserable weapon to make you deny your Faith! But you gave your life for it. May your mediation support us, and may your prayers protect the Body of our Orthodox Church from every malicious arrow of the enemy. Amen.”

The Church of the True Orthodox Christians believes and proclaims that Catherine contested unto blood, and that she belongs to the choir of the Holy Martyrs. November 15/28, the day of her death, is the anniversary of the new Martyr Catherine.

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